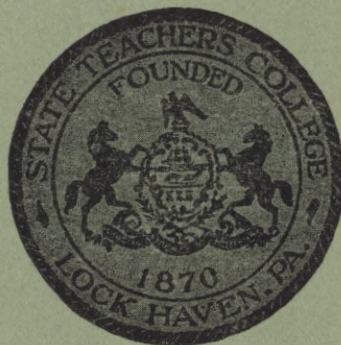


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The Rimmon Trom From Gaza

or

How I Achieved Fame in the Literary World

JOE HUTNYAN

Once, very early in my writing career, when I was a mere unknown, I found it convenient to take a course in poetry from the famous Professor Zogby. I have always thought my trip to the top began one day in October of 1910, when he assigned the sonnet. That night I went home, and as luck would have it, was struck with a bolt of inspiration such as artists seldom experience. In the finest pentameter, I dashed off what I considered a most tender thing. A masterpiece of simplicity, it was literally reeking with all kinds of feeling.

The next day, wearing a smile that connected both ears, I handed my piece to the good professor and modestly waited for the fine superlatives that I felt confident were soon to come my way. I was rather surprised when I saw Mr. Zogby crumble my masterpiece. With a look of indifference, he pitched it into the waste basket.

"Mr. Zogby," I managed to gasp, "you've just thrown away fourteen lines of my life."

"Pardon me if I offend you," he said, "I throw it away because I think it is worse than inferior. The inferior ones I use to wipe my pen with!"

I clutched the back of the chair for support. "But--but," I stammered, "everyone liked it—the landlord, my roommate, all my friends. Joe Binks, editor of *The College Speaker*. They were lavish in their praise. Some it moved to moist eyes. Everyone understood it."

Suddenly the professor jumped to his feet. With poised index finger, he whispered dramatically, "That, my Son, is precisely what was the matter with it. Everyone *understood* it. If you will excuse my lapsing into the phraseology of the layman, may I ask how in the hell you ever hope to achieve immortality with a poem that everyone understands? Tell me, Son," he said tenderly, putting his arm around my shoulder, "have you ever read Emerson, Browning, Milton?"

I admitted that I had.

"Did you know what they were talking about in those masterpieces of good literature?"

I admitted that I hadn't.

"The secret!" he announced, pointing his finger heavenward again. "That piece of trash that I just disgraced my waste basket with! The rhyme scheme's too easy; every other line. Ha! Ha!"

he laughed uproariously. "Nobody will scratch his head over that one. And the subject—love. Everyone knows what love is, having had the distasteful experience one or more times in his life. This *pride* and *tide*, *demure* and *endure* stuff doesn't go, Son, not if you want to make the Cambridge History of English Literature. And not one classical reference! Go, my Son, and try once more," he said kindly, and please, never, never bring such rubbish to me again.

Quietly I left.

That evening I opened four books which I posted at various spots around my typewriter. I picked up a blank sheet of typing paper and began to write. I wrote through the whole night, finishing the last line just ten minutes before breakfast call.

That morning I presented my project to Zogby. I can't remember ever before seeing my instructor more excited. He read my poem, he re-read it, he looked at me, he sighed, and then he slumped back in his chair as if he were to faint. "Meaty!" was the first audible word he managed to gasp. "Meaty," he said again. "This one's meaty. The other was superficial, shallow. This is profound. Beootiful," he murmured, after reading it the third time. Then he proceeded to ask me a few questions about the thought and purpose of my poem. I was unable to answer his inquiries.

"Excellent, excellent," he cried. "I told you it was profound, all the earmarks of a classic. You must go to work immediately on the footnotes. To keep such a treasure unpublished is a crime against the literary world."

I stayed up the next two nights writing the footnotes.

Of course you know by now that my sonnet, "The Rimmon Trom From Gaza," was responsible for my making my mark in the Art World today. Below, as a fitting finale to this success story, printed word for word, is my sonnet. Under it, to explain the poem, I have printed the footnotes. In order to interpret the footnotes, below them, I have installed footnotes to the footnotes. Read and be moved!

The Rimmon Trom From Gaza

"Hoy, hoy, perchance," cried the rimmon trom¹ from Gaza,²
"Where is your jest today, where is your jest today?"
"I just don't know where my jest is," the answer plain and clear.
Eternal spirits shove off through Buris.³
Lookee here, look, look, it's Shakespeare with his smelly bone.⁴
Thy memory is fresh, Will. We think of you all the time, Will.
Many a curse hast thou brought forth, Will, etra, etra, etra.⁵
"Hoy, hoy, perchance," cried the rimmon trom from Gaza.

"Where is your jest today, where is your jest today?"
"I just don't know where my jest is," the answer plain and clear.
How much are hamburgers, the tramp asked the chorus girl.⁶
"Hoy, hoy, perchance," cried the rimmon trom from Gaza.
To Stygian⁷ with all rules, to Stygian⁷ with all rules.
But Mama gave me lard sandwiches,⁸ lard, lard with maza.⁹

Footnotes to Poem

1. "trom," low brow Athenian for "puppy."
2. "Gaza," near Mount Cerebean, hangout of the great God Tii.^a
3. "Buris," a side entrance to Purgatory. In Greek mythology the Goddess of malingering slipped through this entrance to avoid paying the amusement tax.
4. "smelly bone," allegorical reference to the rib taken from Adam, a direct insult aimed at the female sex.
5. "etra, etra, etra," shortening for "long live."^b
6. "How much are—," thrilling influx of modern-day realism. Author exhibits genius in contrast in this stanza.
7. "Stygian," classical term for Hell. Author proclaims freedom of style.
8. "But Mama—," indicative of the trials and tribulations experienced by the poet during his early life of poverty.
9. Note exquisitely original rhyme scheme, first line "Gaza" rhyming with the last line "maza." Rhyme scheme technically stated, A B C D E F G H I J K L M A. Meter also is original.

Footnotes to Footnotes

- a. "Tii," first son of Ammul, wanted to organize the Jebisian fire-eaters under title of Local Number 707.
- b. "long live," allegorical for "quick die."

May 23

ERNEST FOUST

The men were quiet. These men who got roaring drunk, swore, gambled, and robbed whores in Naples when they got the chance were quiet. Men who went to church, prayed, wrote cheerful letters home to worried families were quiet too. All were quiet and thinking.

God knows into which category these men fall, carousers, or church goers. But does God care where they stand? On the battlefields there are only those who fight, those who run, those who live, and those who die. Maybe God is not interested at all in these men, for apparently His hand is not present to protect the ones who have attended His churches or followed in any way His teachings. They die too.

What man could study the faces and lives of these men now crouched in this narrow creek bed on this, the Anzio Beachhead, and say: "This man will go fifteen hundred yards and live. This man will not go three steps"? Or, "Here is one who will make it half way"? What act, what chance remark, what prayers determine the spot of ground on which a man will fall and bleed his life away?

Where is God's vaunted power now? Has not the might of man halted the growth of this tree which God had decreed should grow, bear leaves, make shade, and fasten the soil with its roots? Look at it now. Only five limbs remain pointed toward the sky, broken, shattered, charred limbs. This is not what God willed but what man has wrought.

The silent men stare from sleep-starved eyes. They see and feel without understanding. They stare at each other and ask themselves, "Will he or I live today?" Whether they would admit it or not, they wonder if it is better to live today only to go through this torment again until . . . Here and there a word is spoken to a special friend and reassuring, hopeful glances exchanged. A whispered query, "Okay to smoke?" is followed by a hurried fumbling for cigarettes and matches when consent is granted from up ahead.

Look at Frankie there with his feet in the water and his mind miles away. He's probably thinking about the last letter from his wife. "The doctor says it will be in May. I wish you could be here, but of course you cannot. Mother and Dad will take care of me until you can come back to me."

Now day has taken possession of the beachhead again. There is no turning back now. The foxholes which sheltered and confined for seven days lie to the rear across empty, open fields which enemy guns control. The present vantage point has been gained under cover of darkness, and if the enemy were aware of its present state of occupancy they could turn this creek bed into a roaring, fiery hell. This thought, too, is in the minds of the silent men.

This is not really a creek. Not to a Pennsylvanian, a Virginian, or a New Yorker. It is really a narrow ditch with tall, straight sides higher than a man's head—thank God. At the bottom the ditch is very narrow, and only in a few places can one stand without having his feet in the muddy water. Like the tree, the ditch is marred by shells, and the sickening smell of gunpowder hangs like a fog.

Six-fifteen is the time according to this watch. In fifteen minutes the artillery away behind us will open fire on the enemy positions. They will knock out the enemy's artillery and blast the machine gunners out of their positions. But somehow these waiting men will still be shot at with artillery, and after the battle GRO men will pick up the riddled corpses.

The skies have cleared, and as scheduled, dive bombers appear suddenly and conduct their business with detached efficiency. Following them come low-level bombers flying resolutely and unwaveringly over the enemy positions. The dull *krrump krrump* of their bombs is interspersed with the staccato chattering of the

fifty-caliber machine guns of the dive bombers. "Atta boys, give 'em hell!" and similar encouragement comes from the mouths of the infantrymen. As their red-rimmed eyes drink in the scene, they forget their own futures for the moment. The bombers are part of the plan of attack, the attack that will break the beachhead and sweep on to liberate Rome.

At exactly six-thirty the beachhead far behind the ditch erupts with a roar as all available artillery begins to pour shells into the enemy positions. Instinctively the men in the ditch crouch lower as the shells scream overhead. Some look at the shattered tree and silently hope there will be no short rounds. The shells burst on the forward enemy positions and blast the known strong points. This barrage will continue for a given time. Then the men in the ditch will move forward behind a rolling barrage.

As the time nears for the men in the ditch to advance, they check their rifles and grenades for the last time. Someone takes a long drink of the chlorinated water in his canteen. It may be his last. Cigarettes are stuck into the bank or dropped in to the bottom of the ditch where the fire is drowned by the muddy water and the hiss by the roar of the artillery. Details of the plan come to mind. "To the right is an old house which probably contains a machine gun nest. The tanks or the artillery is supposed to get that. If they don't it is up to the third squad of the third platoon. The third platoon will lead, followed by the second and then the first. The first squad takes the left side of this ditch and the second squad takes the right side. The third squad will divide. You men who carry anti-tank grenades be sure to save some because there will probably be a counter attack. Don't use all your hand grenades either. You're going to have lots of support and everything has been planned to the last detail. Five trees mark the objective. Take up positions along that small canal you will find there."

Now there is some activity farther up the ditch. "Okay, get ready. Keep your interval when we move out." The waiting is over. Some say that is the worst part. Sloshing forward through the water the men walk stiffly until the blood returns to their cramped muscles.

Captain Black and 1st Sgt. Evans stand at a point in the ditch where paths lead up each side to the flat, open fields. "Up this way, soldier," shouts the captain to a man who has started up the wrong side. Someone slips in the muddy water and curses. The clay sides of the bank have become slippery as a result of the light drizzle which has begun to fall and the water from the soldiers' boots.—It used to rain almost every Fourth of July back home.

Over the side you go. Run! Run! Run! Not too fast, you're

bunching up up there. "Keep moving! Keep moving!" Ahead they shout, "Send up a medic, medic up here!"

"My God what noise!"

"Keep moving."

Where are those machine guns firing from? They must be our heavies providing overhead fire. There's that house, it's just a pile of stones now . . . no machine gun there. Those must be the trees up there ahead. I can only see four, though.

Sergeant Paul Randolph, his face all gray, is dying in Jerry Bennett's arms. Jerry is crying like a baby and holding Paul's head on his lap. They joined the outfit at the same time and always stayed together. Paul has a wife and two kids. Jerry is oblivious to the shouting, running soldiers.

"Keep moving!"

"Where's the medics?"

There's the tanks! . . . three of 'em . . . only one isn't moving. A big hole has been torn in one track by a mine. The tankers are jumping out and running for the ditch.

"Keep moving! Walk in the tank tracks!"

Jimmy Sloan kicks one of those bouncing mines. It jumps up but does not explode. He and the men around him keep going ahead.

Something big and dark, the size of a football, comes flying out of the ditch ahead. Three men hit the dirt. Two men get up and go on, but the third lies rolling and calling for a medic. His foot is blown off. He's lucky at that. It must have been a German bazooka shell that got him. His face is blackened by the powder.

"Medic up here! Pass the word back for the medics!"

This is the ditch where the Germans were dug in. The holes they dug go back into the sides of the ditch. There lies a Jerry only half dressed. The surprise element sure worked. With a squad on each side, the khaki-clad men fire into the holes on the opposite side of the ditch from themselves. At some holes they crouch and throw a grenade. The grenade makes a muffled sound as it explodes in the holes.

Here is a slight rise where the Jerries have dug trenches and placed sandbagged machine guns. There is a barb wire fence that one of the tanks has smashed down . . . What are those flowers? Look at them! A whole bunch of them! "In Flanders fields the poppies grow among the crosses . . ." That must be what they are. I'll be damned!

We have no more tanks left. Two have hit mines and the

third has slid into the ditch where it is now stuck. There is Captain Black shouting at the one in the ditch. "Keep those goddam machine guns going! What the hell are you guys afraid of? Keep 'em going, goddam you!"

Here comes a German! He has no gun or helmet and his hands are clasped on the back of his head. "Nix schiesen! Nix schiesen! Kammerad! Kammerad!"

"Shoot the bastard! Shoot the bastard!" Sgt. Evans is screaming. The back of the sergeant's field jacket is red with blood.

The German is coming this way. He has passed two men.

"Nix schiesen! Kammerad!"

"Shoot the bastard! Shoot the bastard!"

He has passed the third man now.

Jimmy Sloan raises his rifle, hesitates a moment.

"Shoot the bastard! Shoot the bastard!"

"Nix schiesen! Mein Gott! Mein Gott!" The German falls on his knees pleading for mercy, his eyes wild with terror.

Jimmy Sloan's finger contracts automatically. The rifle recoils and the German pitches forward on his face. From the hole torn in his back his intestines puff out in two squirming loops. He writhes in the mud and screams. Jimmy moves on.

Two men squat and prepare to fire rifle grenades. One is a veteran and the other a new replacement. Each braces his rifle butt against the inside of his right foot, then estimates the elevation and aims up the ditch ahead of the farthest soldiers. The veteran fires first, the grenade arching through the air and exploding in the ditch. When the replacement's grenade lands there is no explosion. Angrily he fires another, this time pulling the safety pin.

Now we all go down into the ditch. The Jerries have cut paths into the sides so they would not have to walk in the water. Lots of Jerries are surrendering now. They are sent down the ditch to the rear. They look scared and bewildered. They do not remove their clasped hands from behind their heads even when they fall. The Americans stand on the paths and make the prisoners wade through the muddy water.

Here is the objective. It's all over; there is only a little small arms fire now. Over to the left E Company is still giving them hell, though.

"Third platoon, stay here and dig in . . . about twenty feet apart. Second platoon, go on up above and dig in. Save room up there on that high spot for a heavy machine gun. The heavies will be here pretty soon." Sgt. Evans is all business. The blood on his field jacket is turning dark.

"Hey, Joe what time is it?"

"Quarter after eight."

"The hell you say! Jeez, we did all right . . . weren't supposed to make it till nine. Where's Barnes?"

"Got one through the head."

"Jeez, that's too bad. How about Moe?"

"He's here I think. There's only two men left in the second squad."

"Hell you say! Who are they?"

"Pinky and Smitty."

"What happened to Frankie?"

"Got his foot blown off. He'll be home 'fore long."

"Goddam, this is hard diggin. Let's open a can of cheese, I'm hungry as hell."

On Happiness

FRANK A. RACKISH

Today I received a card from John, a friend of mine who is studying for the priesthood. His message was very brief, merely stated that he would not be home for the week-end as he had planned, and added that he was well and happy.

I met John last summer. He and I worked together in a brick-yard. John had been nicknamed "Father" by the other employees, and he was subject to a great deal of good-natured kidding. During the course of a working day he would be greeted by such things as "Hey, Father, you better hire a nice young cook that can keep you warm on the cold winter nights," and somebody would add, "Yeah, Father, better get yourself a bed-buddy." John took such remarks in stride and laughed with the fellows, but the remarks obviously made him think.

One day as we sat eating our dinner he told me about his parents, his brother and his two sisters, and about the fun which they had going on picnics, visiting friends, and celebrating holidays together. But despite the fact that John realized the pleasures of family life, he believed, he said, that he would be truly happy in following his priestly duties and did not consider that giving up the possibility of having a wife and family was a great sacrifice. His face beamed when he told me of the success which he had recently had in bringing a man back to the Church. John was happy, he was sure, when he was at college studying and discussing his religious creed. His mind was free from worry. His goal, to make people believe in God and to follow the teachings of Christ, was

completely satisfying; and as an apostle of Christ he was assured of happiness after death.

My barber is an entirely different character, not so serious as John, but certainly clever and aware of things about him. He waves to me as I'm crossing the street coming in the direction of his shop, smiles broadly and greets me with a "How ya doin'?" as I enter. I sit down in the chair; he gets his glasses from the shelf and begins talking slowly and steadily.

Yes, sir. It was 1919 when he got out of the service and entered the barber trade as an apprentice to his father. You should have seen some of those first haircuts; they were terrible. In fact, the old man had steady work straightening them up. But with a little practice he became pretty good, and he has had work consistently, even during the Depression he was pretty well off. He only charged thirty-five cents for a haircut then, but what a basket of groceries you got for five dollars! Hell, you almost needed a truck to get the order home. Two years ago his younger son re-enlisted into the Army and is in Alaska now. What a man for the ladies! He's a mingler who can be the life of any party. Only last week he telegraphed home for seventy-five dollars. Then, there's Jim, his other son, who is a shipping clerk at a paper mill. He and his wife were down last evening. Jim likes baked ham and beans, and that's what his mother cooked for supper. Boy, did that make Jim happy! And he and his wife stayed until almost midnight playing cards and talking.

Yeah, my barber's pretty happy but with a few beers under his belt, he says, he couldn't worry or be sad if he tried. Wouldn't this be a great life if everybody just had enough brew to feel good? There would be friendship, laughter, and singing. People would forget the little faults of their neighbors, would help each other in time of trouble, and they would stop gossiping about each other. What a friendly, smiling, carefree world that would be.

To see an individual happy is a pleasant experience, but to see a group happy is a delight. When I was in college, one of my friends there, a Polish fellow, invited me to his home. When we arrived there we were amazed to find that his family was out, but Ed beamed when he read the note which had been left for him on the kitchen table. Anna, one of his friends, had been married that morning, and we were to come to the wedding feast, which was being held at the Polish Hall. Ed was enthusiastic, and when I explained that we hadn't really been invited, he just laughed. How simple it was for those people to make me feel at home! Everybody seemed to swoop down on us as we entered the hall. Before I knew it, I had been introduced to children, people of about my own age, old ladies and old men, the bride and groom, and the

parish priest.

What a dinner we had—ham, chicken, kolbasi, sirek, bobalki. Everything was so good that I loosened my belt three notches before I stopped eating. While we ate, the orchestra played waltz music, and people chattered continually, some in Polish, some in English, and some in a combination of the two, but they all were making themselves understood. The children were treated royally; everybody seemed to give them attention. During the meal a plate was passed around the table and all the people contributed generously. This money was to give the bride and groom a start in their married life. I asked Ed how one family could afford such a wedding and was surprised when he explained to me that it was a group affair. Everybody contributed food, drink, and assistance.

And after dinner the tables were cleared and pushed aside, and the band started to play polkas. For awhile everybody danced; many of the older ladies wore brightly colored scarves and jackets which they had brought to America with them from their native Poland, and as they danced round and round, it seemed that bright reds, greens, and blues danced too as they must have danced on the commons and in the halls back in Poland. But soon the older people became exhausted and gathered in groups to talk about the weddings, villages, and farms back home in Poland. The younger people continued to polka, but came often to speak to their parents and friends. And the priest went from group to group, speaking and laughing with each of them.

There I believe that I found the essentials of happiness: peace of mind, faith in God, friendship, understanding, love for each other and genuine interest in the good fortune of all.

There is a man, an old friend of my father's, who comes to visit us occasionally, usually on a Sunday afternoon. When one of the family notices his car coming toward our home, the news is immediately conveyed to the rest of the household. Joeie, my little brother, runs out to meet Frank, his wife, and daughter, knowing that he will be rewarded with a large bag of candy. The afternoon is spent telling of things which have happened since their last visit, but during dinner our friend starts warming up, telling us of past experiences in baseball, hunting, fishing, and about his family and his job as foreman for a medical supply company. After dinner, he cannot be stopped, and it is a pleasure to sit by and listen to him reminisce. He speaks with his entire body and gives spark and life to any story. When he tells of Lou Gehrig, Lou Boudreau, and Babe Ruth, we feel that these men are directly in front of us. I shall never forget the day that Babe Ruth struck out in our living room. It was the last of the ninth, the Yanks were behind by two runs, two men were out, two men were on, the great Rube Waddell

had been relieved, and Ruth was at the plate. The Babe was cocky, had an enormous bat which reached half-way across the room, and he was swinging it viciously. The new pitcher was a joker, took plenty of time, taunted Ruth, and finally got on his nerves. I saw Ruth relax right in the center of the floor, and as he did, the new pitcher threw three strikes down the center of the plate, the ball travelling at so great a speed that it looked not bigger than a ping-pong ball. And I heard a resounding crash as Ruth angrily threw his bat away. I can still see my father standing on his seat in Yankee Stadium, yelling to throw the bum out, that there are better baseball players sitting on the bench at Winburne.

And on the serious side, I have listened to his sound theories on psychology, politics, and education. He does not take as truth everything which he reads in newspapers or books, but thinks about what he has read, accepts what he considers sound and rejects that which he thinks is nonsense. But he is aware that his judgment can be fallible. In fact, he enjoys nothing better than to have a person conflict with his views and present sound arguments. If he is convinced on a certain point, he'll look you in the eye, shake his head a little, and say, "Now I believe that you have something there. I believe you're right." Then suddenly the evening would be over, and our visitor would leave. But what an enjoyable evening! And our visitor had provided conversation material for the family for at least a week.

Last week, as I was riding a bus to my home, I met a former schoolmate, a young woman whom I hadn't seen for seven years. She had been married, has two children, a boy, five, and a girl, two, and is now divorced. We talked a lot, first of high school and friends, then of some of our activities during the seven years which had elapsed since our graduation. She talked mostly about her children, and she showed great concern for their future. She spoke slowly and thoughtfully. What she wanted above everything else was to provide her children with an education and a pleasant home. Then she turned quickly towards me and said, "If I can do that, I will be truly happy."

And the majority of people are like Cynthia. They are happiest when their children, friends, and people about them are happy. They find happiness in simple things. And so do I. The smell of freshly cut clover, the clearness of a mountain stream, a steady, warm rain in July, the first snowflake, children's laughter, peace in the world. These things make me happy.

Baseball practice on warm, summer evenings with a group of friends working in harmony, with lots of jokes, and all striving toward a common goal, makes me happy. And after practice, as

we turn in separate directions to walk homeward, I go to the edge of the hill on which our diamond is situated and sit down to cool off. I can view the entire town from there. Several farmers are still working; I can see cows in pastures, the red church with the white cross on the opposite hill, the little railroad station at one end of town, and the mine away up at the opposite end. Everything is green, peaceful, and quiet. This is happiness to me.

In the early fall I train my rabbit dog in the woods and fields. It is a pleasure to sit or stand upon a hill and to listen to my dog's deep bark on the trail of a rabbit somewhere in the valley beneath. There is a moment's excitement as I notice the rabbit running through a clearing, and a few minutes later, after the rabbit has "holed up," there is almost complete silence. And there are only the trees and hills to watch, and a dog to praise for his ability. There is peace, contentment, and happiness.

And church on early Sunday morning, with everybody looking clean and "dressed-up," the altar decorated with flowers, and the priest wearing his robes, singing the Mass, brings happiness.

But happiness is a personal thing, and the individual must find it for himself. He must first search and experiment. Perhaps he will be confused for awhile, but ultimately he will find where his true happiness lies.

The Cry from the Barrens

B. M. KERIN

The room was cold and damp as Johnny Walton surveyed the bare walls. Here he was and he had no one left to love. It was Christmas, too. One window let what little light there was into the room. Even that window was bare . . . no curtains, no nothing. "Son-of-a-bitch," Johnny said, half to himself, half to the world. His wife had been there earlier in the day. She had brought their two kids with her and they had been yelling like little devils: "Daddy's been away." What the hell did they know about Daddy being away? What did they care? Pretty soon their mother would find another Daddy for them and they wouldn't even remember him. Johnny was bitter, and why shouldn't he be? No one ever gave him an even break. Even the priest kept bothering him. It had been fun for a little while when Ada brought the kids in to see him. She had come in what these morons called the true Christmas spirit. Nevertheless he had treated her nice, because she was his wife and those two blonde haired, blue-eyed kids were his. He could remember when they had come up to the bars in front of his barren cell. They weren't permitted to come inside, but they had come, regardless. At least, that was something.

He could remember Ada in her plain print dress and her smile

ing brown eyes . . . those cute lines that ran from the corners of her mouth to her cheeks. Those little things he always noticed. Ada was the kind of woman that no man could forget, and that no man could overlook. She had always been his alone, so far as he knew. When she first came, she said: "Hello Johnny . . . Merry Christmas." She seemed to breathe those words like sobs. He knew that it hurt her to see him behind bars. But what the hell? It hurt him to be behind bars, too. The kids, too, had said, "Merry Christmas, Daddy," but they were too young to understand. Little Billie, well built and strong, five years old, and with his big brown teddy bear tucked firmly under his arm, seemed to think it was all a big game. He had looked up at Ada and said gleefully: "Lookee, Daddy's poutin' again. He's locked himself up." His eyes had turned to Johnny . . . "Come on out, Daddy. Don't you know it's Christmas?"

That had hurt Johnny more than anything else. Couldn't somebody tell the damn kid that he couldn't come out? Did he think that his Daddy would stay in there if he could get out? Johnny had looked down at his son and muttered: "Sure, kid, I'll be home later." Ada had cried then, not loudly and uncontrolledly, but just a steady flow of tears down over her lovely cheeks. "I'll explain it all to them later," she had whispered to him.

"Sure, Ada, you'll have a long time to tell them why I couldn't make it this Christmas. How did they act this morning when they got their toys? You didn't tell them that there isn't a Santa Claus, did you?"

"No, Johnny, I didn't tell them that there is no Santa Claus. But I can't believe in Santa Claus with you in here. Oh, Johnny, it was awful this morning. They were terribly happy and I tried to be for their sake, if for nothing else."

"Sure, Ada, you keep your chin up and everything will be the nuts. Take good care of Johnny, and make sure that he plays football when he gets in high school. Try to make him play in the backfield some where. Take good care of Ann, too. Make sure she gets a good husband or does whatever she wants to do." Ada had promised all those things before she left. She had taken each kid by a hand and started down the long bare corridor of the cell block. She had watched him as far down the block as was possible and then she had turned the corner. His family had gone.

Mentally, he returned to the damp cold cell to wait. If he twisted his neck and put his head partly through the bars, he could see the clock down at the end of the corridor. Half past seven . . . two more hours until lights out, he thought. Johnny was talking to himself, now. His mind was playing tricks on him. All that damned soft stuff about his wife and kids. Hell, they didn't care

anything about him. Why should he worry about them? Hell, wasn't he a tough guy? Hadn't he, with his bare hands, strangled that damned no good Jim Hearston? He could remember it as if it had been yesterday.

Ada and he had been at a party . . . just a small affair: three couples, Jim and his wife, George and his wife, and he and Ada. Jim had been mixing the drinks . . . Jim had always mixed good drinks, always strong. He had been a little high and the room was slightly darker than usual as his vision had dimmed. Then they had talked about railroading. All three had worked in the same office and Jim had chided him about brown-nosing the boss. Maybe he did do favors for the boss, but hadn't he got two raises while those other two punks were still working for the same salary? Hell, if he could get ahead, why should they worry? But Jim had been slightly envious and had rubbed it in pretty hard. One thing led to another, and then he had made that nasty crack about Jim's running after that blonde that worked in their office. Jim had swung at him and missed. He had been just drunk enough to lose his head. They grabbed each other and went down in a heap. He had been on top. He had grabbed Jim by the head and slammed it down (he forgot how many times) on the hard-wood floor. Then he had picked him up and squeezed his neck so hard that his thumb had popped through the skin right below his ear. The blood had gushed out in a big puddle on the floor. Only then had he and the others realized what had happened. Then the police had come and he had withstood their third degrees without once cracking. That's the way it had been, and he wasn't sorry. It probably wasn't the best thing in the world for his kids, but they would get along. As he had it figured out, Ada would find someone else.

Man, he had received a lot of publicity out of that strangling. One paper had called him a "mad individual." Other papers said it was a love-triangle killing. He wondered what the other fellows at the office had said about it. They had probably never suspected that he was tough enough to kill anybody.

He wriggled around on the hard steel bench and looked down the long corridor to the clock. Twenty minutes after nine . . . only ten more minutes until they put the lights out. Then he heard footsteps coming in his direction. He could hear each inmate say to the owner of the footsteps: "Merry Christmas, Father," and the return was: "Merry Christmas, lad, and God bless you." That damned priest was coming to see him again.

Now the Father was opening the cell door and stepping in. "Good evening, Johnny. I thought I'd come down to hear your prayers. You know you only have five more minutes."

"I don't want any part of prayer; I'm not sorry; I'd do it again . . ." Johnny snarled.

"Okay, Johnny, you know what's inside you."

The priest looked back over his shoulder at the man and the two guards who had just walked up. "Okay, Warden, take him; I can't help him."

As Johnny was walking down the corridor toward the gas chamber, loud choking sobs issued from his body and his lips were moving; "Merry Christmas, Ada; Merry Christmas, Billie and Ann. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph have mercy on me and forgive me."

Father Murphy didn't know, but he had helped.

Country Butchering

PHILIP E. HARBACH

Inside the spacious kitchen, with its walnut wainscoating, huge hutch-table, and built-in pine cupboard, Mom and Sis and two of my neighboring aunts were scurrying alternately from stove to sink, from sink to stove with fond concern over the huge dinner they were preparing. During the previous day Mom and Sis had done the baking—mince and pumpkin pies, a walnut and a Brown Stone Front cake—the usual dessert to top Pennsylvania Dutch dinners such as this was to be. In the oven, in two giant roasters, were four once-proud cockerels, taken from last spring's flock, roasting to a tempting brown goodness. In the pine sink was an apple butter crock filled to the brim with peeled potatoes that were covered with icy water, and beside the crock were gleaming jars of canned Golden Bantam corn and green stringbeans which were to be opened later. On the screened-in porch were several of the pies and the fruit salad chilling in the early winter air.

In the barnyard was a motley collection of cars. The head butcher's asthmatic Ford pick-up (he had brought along four of his hickory scaffolds) stood beside an antiquated Plymouth that belonged to the woman who considered herself automatically hired to clean skins for every butchering within a radius of ten miles. The reflecting beauty of the nearest neighbor's new '49 Chevrolet conflicted with the dreary rustiness of another neighbor's '34 DeSoto. Long before the arrival of these farmers, Pop had filled the sooty iron kettles with water, and they were already hanging from hooks and were beginning to steam above a crackling fire—in the open fireplace by the woodshed.

In the lean-to hog-pen, punctillious menfolk were gathered, each shivering a little in the penetrating wind that blew through cracks in the wall. Pop, with his .22 in hand, and the others, with stabbing knives, closed in for the slaughter. Slowly Pop raised

the .22, carefully peered through the sights—and fired! With a faint squeal, the first sow fell into a limp heap—a bullet directly through her forehead. Numerous pairs of hands—caloused, tanned, and weatherbeaten—strained and tugged to lift the body onto a sled. The wind smelled of warm blood and approaching snow; at the end of the garden, aspens swayed metrically against the deep shadows of the surrounding forest.

Pop clambered onto the bouncing tractor seat and hauled the sled and prostrate hog around the corner of the hog-pen, glancing occasionally over his shoulder at the swaying body, to the stone fire-place where the sturdy hickory scaffolds had been erected. There a sea of hands lowered the flaccid animal into a wooden scalding trough; a cascade of boiling water pummeled from the sooty iron kettles over the body. Instantly the sea of hands withdrew a sea of scrapers from the secluded shadows of the woodpile; each man began persuasively scraping the short dark hairs from the hog until the floating hairs formed an opaque scum on the water. The steam from the boiling water and the body heat of the hog converged into a moist perspiration on the hardened faces of the workers. Once more caloused and weather-beaten hands hoisted the shimmering hog up the scaffold until it swung free by the tendons in its legs.

Again shots resounded from the hog-pen, and again another hog dangled from the scaffolds. More shots . . . and soon four bulky hogs hung from sagging scaffolds, their naked bodies beaming like small boys' neatly washed faces. The scent of warm blood and early winter mingled with the stench of scalded bristles and skin, the repugnance for which caused the workers to twitch their noses. The main butcher slit each hog down the center of its body; the skin curled pink and thin from under the knife; and steaming blood dropped rapidly, coagulating as it hit the crisp air and packed earth. Each head was removed and was again scraped, this time for hiding and sulking hairs. The intestines were removed from the bodies and given to the woman to clean, to be used as sausage casings later.

Now it was meal time. The workers left bisected hogs glaring in the noon-day sun and entered the kitchen, pausing only long enough to wash their hands in the watering-trough. Their ravenous appetites were stimulated by the collected odors of the steaming dishes which inundated the huge hutch-table. These appetites were then satisfied by a bill-of-fare which was to the farm women half-exhibition of their mastery of the culinary art and half-holiday—roast chicken, gravy, mashed and sweet potatoes, sweet corn, green beans, raw celery sticks, and the pies, cakes, and fruit salad. Soon all that remained of this feast was chicken bones and a few

uneaten pie crusts. The complacent farmers took time out on the porch for cigarettes and to comment on the amount of lard the four hogs were expected to yield, then returned to the dangling sides of pork. Steady hands removed the slabs of uncut meat from the scaffolds and placed them on a sturdy pine work-table. Sharp saws, cleavers, and thin knives, under the direction of skilled hands, produced choice cuts—neatly trimmed hams, shoulders, chops, roasts, and bacons—from the once-clumsy animals.

Small chunks of fat and remnants from the trimmed cuts of pork were chucked into one of the heavy iron kettles and swung over the glowing embers of the fire for the rendering of lard. Other remnants and pieces of meat were cooked and then put through an antiquated sausage grinder to come out the other end in snake-like coils of stuffed sausages. The contents in the iron kettle came to a smoldering boil and slowed down to a moderate simmering. Numerous lard cans were filled with the liquid and placed aside in the biting air to cool and solidify. Other vat-like kettles produced liver-pudding and scrapple, seasoned to suit various individual tastes.

The neighboring farmers began to depart, each with his own particular tiredness, concerned with his own unfinished evening chores, and preoccupied by his own enthusiastic relief from a trying day. When all the neighbors had gone, Pop turned his thoughts to his own evening chores and to his store of hams and shoulders and mentioned to himself that in the morning they must be given the first rubbing—salt and pepper, brown sugar and a little salt-peter—the first steps in the curing process. And yet that evening he should hang the bacons in the hazy smoke-house over a smoldering hickory fire . . .

The sunlight waned. All the delicate and subtle coloring that is a part of the early winter landscape—the fine red lines of the stems of low bushes, the faded rust of dead grasses, the lavender of distance—was drained away by the dusk that crouched on the surface of the creek and the darkness that lurked in the enfolding hills and nearby gaps. There was nothing at all to be seen but fungus-covered maples and birches embroidering a sparse design on the permanent dark fabric of evergreens.

Jordy, Jordy—

CHARLES T. ARDARY

A car was coming up behind Christie. She stumbled a little as she moved off the road. The car slowed down and finally stopped about fifteen feet in front of her. She was frightened for a minute.

“C'mon, Christie. I'll give you a ride.”

She recognized his sister's voice. She walked up to the car, opened the door and crawled in.

"Coming up to the house?" Sig asked.

"No, I'm going up to the club. Jordy told me to come up tonight," Christie said.

"Oh." Sig paused. "I got a letter from Pete today. He's bought a new house. Stop in a minute. I'll let you read it."

"No. I had better go up to Jordy. He said I should be there about ten."

"Don't worry about your man so much." Sig paused again. Christie didn't say anything. Sig glanced over at Christie. Even in the dark Sig could see the outline of Christie's face—sharp, peaked, lips so tightly closed that they were hardly perceptible in the outline. In her mind Sig filled in the rest—leathery-looking skin, drawn, cold blue eyes with a determined look. A small woman but wiry. "I'd drive down to see Pete's house if the tires on this car were any good."

"I'll be up tomorrow to read Pete's letter. I don't know where Jordy will go if I'm not up there at ten."

"Oh, stop in a minute. The kids are supposed to be watching the coffee. I'll drive you up right away."

"No. I'm going up to the club."

"Forget about your man for a few minutes. You're making a nervous wreck out of yourself."

"There you go. You stick up for him too. You know I don't trust Jordy. Not since I saw him out there letting that Berg woman shoot his gun. He was showing her how. Those kids of mine, Marvin and Jenny, they stick up for him too. They say they didn't see him do anything wrong. They say I couldn't even see him for the bushes. Well, I saw him all right, standing there close to her and holding his hand under hers on the barrel of the gun—"

"Yes, Christie . . . I'll drive you up to the club." Sig drove a little faster. She tooted the horn two or three times when she drove by her home. Sig pulled up right in front of the walk and left the headlights on so Christie could see. Then waited until Christie got on the porch.

Christie looked at her watch as soon as she was on the porch. Ten minutes before ten. She rang the bell and Wash opened the door. "Oh, come on in, Christie. Lookin' for Jordy? He's down in the cellar watchin' the poker game." Christie hurried into the vestibule. Stopped in front of the door to the bar. She looked in. She didn't trust Wash. Thought maybe her husband was at the bar. Then she walked through the brightly lighted meeting hall

without looking to see who was there, and into the dance hall. She was afraid Jordy was in there and would slip out through the kitchen and back in through the bar. Nobody was on the dance floor. She turned around and went over to the corner table nearest the door in the meeting hall. The waiter came over to her.

"What'll you have, Christie?" the waiter said looking down at the doleful looking woman with her fist loosely clenched and holding it in front of her chin, apparently thinking.

"Well, I don't know. What have you?" Christie said, very carefully enunciating every syllable in her most sophisticated manner. The waiter knew what was on her mind. There was only one thing that was ever on her mind.

"Oh, anything you want."

"Well, give me a bottle of beer."

"Ok."

Christie looked around the meeting room filled with the smoke from cigarettes of six or eight other people in the room. There was Mrs. Force over there. Little Jimmie was asleep on the chair beside her. He was leaning his head against Mrs. Force's arm, the same flabby arm that was holding a baby in a faded pink blanket. Christie raised her hand and flipped her fingers, vaguely simulating a wave. She got up and walked across the room to Mrs. Force, completely forgetting her beer that was coming.

"Say, have you seen Jordy tonight?"

"Not lately. I saw him right after the meeting. That was about nine, I guess. He was over looking at the baby. What do you think of the baby?" Mrs. Force said with a big grin that exposed four or five yellow teeth. Christie shifted her weight to the other foot.

"Oh, he's fine looking. You know, I told Jordy I would be up here at ten to have a glass of beer and go home with him and now he's run down in the cellar."

"Yea. That's the way men are. I haven't seen my man all night. Guess he's up here someplace."

"I can't understand these men. Jordy hardly ever went out until about six months before Jenny got married. Then when Marvin came home from the Marines he started coming up here and drinking with him every night."

"Like I told you. That's the way men are."

Christie glanced around the room to see if there was anyone else that she knew. She spied her bottle of beer sitting by itself. "I'd better go back and drink my beer before it goes flat. Goodbye."

She turned around and left. Jordy had time to come over and

talk to her but don't have time to wait for me, Christie thought. Back at the table nearest the door, Christie poured her beer into the glass. She caught the eye of the waiter. He came. She paid him. "Say, would you mind telling somebody at the bar to go down after Jordy?"

"Ok," and he left.

Christie resumed her wait. At first she just sat there staring blankly. Then she started gazing around the room at the various pictures. Wash walked into the room, looked around, and then sat down with Christie.

"Well, how's everything going, Christie?"

"Oh, fine. Wish that husband of mine would come!" she said, her anger showing. She knew Wash too well to put on any airs, and no one was near.

"He'll be up in a minute. Shouldn't hurry him. He was in the game this last time I was down there. Think he's winning. Maybe he'll bring you some money," he joked. Chuckled a bit, till his large jowls jiggled.

"Oh," she said, "well, then he could send some money up for a bottle of beer."

"I'll buy you one," he said, motioning to the waiter and then holding up two fingers. Everything he did antagonized Christie. Two men she didn't know walked by.

"Really, I shouldn't drink any more. I—maybe, I'll get a little dizzy." She turned the glass half-way around, ran her fingers up the side, turned the glass around.

"Nah." A silence. "Well, Christie, fishin' season comes in pretty soon. Guess Jordy's all ready for it?"

"Yes. You'll be taking my man away from me again. "Now, she was rocking the glass from one side to the other. Her other hand tightly clenched the large snap on her purse.

"Aw—what do you mean? Man's gotta have some fun," he joked again, just like Wash always jokes. Christie couldn't see the joke.

"Well, so's a woman, but she can't go out like a man can."

"You women get around and talk among yourselves, and that's all you want to do."

"Yea, but, now take Jordy. He could take me up here once in a while. I like to get out and see new faces just like you do. You men feel young when you're going out fishing and hunting, but you're too old to take your wives out."

"Yea, well, I was going back to the kitchen. I'll see you later." Wash polished off the last three quarters of his glass of beer, got up and left.

She sat there thinking. Somehow she had let fishing season slip her mind. I think I'll have Jordy bring me down to visit Pete

in Williamsport next week-end. That's the first week-end after the season starts. He'll probably have that Berg woman waiting for him out there. That's what I'll do. Then, during May, I'll get after him about the springhouse and that wall behind the house. Then Jordy came.

"Been waiting long," he said jerkily. He took his hat off and laid it on the table.

"Oh, about a half-an-hour. Heard you were playing poker?"

"Yea, won a bit. Here, I'll split it with you." He pushed up his jacket in back, reached into his hip pocket, pulled out his wallet, opened it, handed her five and put the wallet back. His jacket stayed pushed up. He didn't seem to mind that it was bunched in a lump as he leaned against the back of the chair. Crossed his legs.

"Wash says you were winning?" questioning whether he was splitting his winnings with her.

"Well, I won eleven."

"How about buying me a bottle of beer then?"

"Ok."

"I think I'll have a whiskey this time. Warm me up before we go home."

"Holy hell, woman, you won't be satisfied 'till you squeeze every nickel out of me," he said in a manner that could be taken seriously or as a joke.

"Well, you always seem to have money to come up here and buy drinks for everyone," Christie said in all seriousness.

"I don't buy drinks for everyone. Hell, I only keep ten out of my pay, and then I buy the gas and oil for the car out of that. I have to tend bar up here for any spending money I have."

"I'm your wife. You ought to take me out once in a while."

Jordy called the waiter and ordered the drinks.

"Jordy, look at that Mrs. Force over there. She ought to have more sense than to bring that baby up here."

"Yep," and they sat in silence for a few minutes. "Stop fidgeting with that glass. You're making me nervous. You'll spill that little bit of beer you have in there."

"You know, Jordy, Sig was saying that she would like to go down and see Pete."

"Uh huh."

"I'd sort of like to see him myself. He wrote and said they had bought a new house. I'd like to see it." She saw the silhouette of Wash through the dark dance hall against the opened kitchen door. He was coming towards them. "Jordy, what do you say we take a trip down next week-end and take Sig and them with us."

"Well, I'm going—Hi, Wash. How's she going?"

"Oh, pretty good. Pretty good. Christie said you're all set for fishing."

"Yep. Rewound my rod here last week. Think I'll take a day off from work and go out the first day." He gave Christie a quick glance as though he had let something slip out.

"Say, Jordy, you'll be going out to camp next Saturday. How about taking some stuff out for me?"

"Well, I'll see." He didn't want to tell Wash that he would, in front of Christie.

"Better be going now," Wash said, slowly pushing the chair in with his high rubber boot. "So long."

"So long. Be seeing you."

"Thought you were going to take me down to see Pete in Williamsport?" Christie said with an air of sarcasm.

"Why didn't you bring that up before now? You knew that fishing season was coming in."

"No, I didn't. You never told me."

"Well, drink up and we'll go home. We'll talk about it later."

"No, we won't. If you can go out with Wash and them fellows next week you can stay with me tonight. I never get out of the house."

"Ok," Jordy said dejectedly. "What do you want to do? Want a sandwich?" No point in arguing with her. She'll only get riled up more, Jordy thought.

"Ok." She paused. Jordy looked around for the waiter. He couldn't see him. "You could put a nickel in the machine and we could dance a little," Christie said.

"I don't want to dance."

"No! All you want to do is go fishing and hunting. You never want to do anything that I want to do. You could go shooting with that Berg—" Jordy got up, walked over to the jukebox and put a nickel in. Christie followed him.

They danced. Looked rather odd. The only couple on the floor. Jordy—tall, stoop-shouldered, lumbering. Christie—short, stiff—almost brittle. Her hard face looked strained, taut.

Somebody yelled, "Think you're young again, Jordy?" Jordy smiled squinting his eyes, then quickly moved to another corner of the floor.

"Jordy, I want the springhouse and that wall behind the house fixed before summer," Christie said defiantly, glaring at Jordy. She knew what he would say to this.

"Why didn't you tell me all this before now? You know that fishing season is coming in next week." Jordy glared back at her.

"Well, it was winter," she excused herself.

"I'll get at them after fishing season."

"That'll be too late."

"Well, that's when I'm going to fix them or I won't fix them at all."

"You don't have to go fishing every week-end."

"You know I go fishing when I can. Hell, I only get a day or two a week during fishing season." He stopped dancing momentarily, then resumed. His head moved from side to side angrily.

"You're going to take me down to Williamsport next week-end or the week-end after," she said raising her voice.

"I'm going fishing," Jordy said rather loudly. Then realizing that they could be heard, "Oh, shut up," he said to her softly. "Everybody is looking at us."

"That Berg woman is going to be out there?"

"Not so loud. Everyone is looking at us." His face felt hot.

"I don't care. I saw you out there with her, only nobody will believe me."

"Let's go home, Christie." Jordy stopped dancing.

"No. If you're going to take a day off next week to go fishing you can stay up here with me. You don't care whether I'm cooped up in that house by myself all the time or not."

"That's not it. I have to go to work tomorrow," Jordy said, trying to calm her.

"That is it. Mrs. Force was here at nine, and you told me to come up here at ten. I could have come up here at nine and you could have talked to me instead of her. You say you give me all the money, but then you turn around and take a day off all the time." The music had stopped. The noise in the other room seemed hushed.

"This'll be the first day this year."

"You're probably going to meet that Berg woman again."

"Holy hell, won't I ever hear the end of that," Jordy yelled forgetting where he was.

"You know I'm right. The kids could prove it if they would."

"I've told you time and again that I was just coming down the stream and met them there at the bridge." Jordy lowered his voice so only Christie could hear him. "They asked me if they could take a shot with my gun. Can't you see that?"

Nearly everyone had stopped talking. Even out at the bar the noise was lower. Tomorrow, the gossip, Jordy thought.

"That's what you say. I know you, Jordy."

Jordy started to leave her. His heavy brogans thumped heavily on the floor. Christie ran after him and grabbed him.

"Jordy, you said you were going to stay here a while with me."

"I will if you stop making damn fools out of us."

Christie lowered her eyes and looked at the floor. "Well, everything I said is true."

"It is not." They walked over to their table and sat down.

Jordy grabbed his beer. He almost dropped it. Put the glass to his lips. A drop or two ran down from one corner of his mouth to the bottom of his chin and gently sprang up and down. The silence in the club developed into low whispers and then gradually grew into the usual din. Laughing, shouting, cursing at the bar. High-pitched voices of a few women in the meeting room. Mrs. Force's rasping. Occasionally two people would talk in subdued voices—Christie and Jordy.

That Berg woman . . . She permeated everything Christie thought about. Marvin and Jenny saw him there letting her shoot his gun but they won't say so. She began rocking her glass. The other hand clenched the snap on her purse so tightly that her knuckles became white. He was showing her how. Out at Gordon—way out in the woods. The Berg woman, her sister and bother-in-law. I don't trust Jordy too far. And the time Wash got drunk and told about the Half-Way House there on the mountain. Jordy got all red in the face then. She must have sat there ten minutes more brooding over this—Jordy, the Berg woman, Wash. She felt as though she were going to burst.

"Jordy, you going to take me down to Pete's?"

"Not this week-end. I'm going fishing."

"When are you going to take me to Williamsport?"

"I don't know." He was irritated. This was fishing season.

"Well, I'm going fishing with you then," Christie said bitterly.

"You can't go with me. You won't walk up and down the stream with me and you won't stay alone." He sounded desperate, as though he were talking to a child that couldn't or wouldn't understand.

"Take me down to Pete's then," Christie said, answering like that child.

"I told you I'm going fishing . . . Oh, hell, I'll tell you what, I'll leave the car here and you can get Sig to run you down."

"You ought to come down with me like a husband should."

"I'm not going down to Pete's." His eyes blazed up again. They glared at each other.

"You're probably going to meet that Berg woman or someone else out there or go down to the Half-Way House again."

"I am not. If you don't shut up I'm going to leave you and you can get home the way you came up."

Christie did shut up—for a while. She continued her brooding. That Berg woman, Wash, the Half-Way House. She added to her list—Jordy's friends taking him away from Christie, Jordy turning the kids against Christie, the kids sticking up for him, Jordy taking money from Christie to give his folks, the stone wall Jordy hasn't built. She felt like crying, screaming.

"I guess I'll go and powder my nose," she said. Got up and

left the table for the far end of the room. Walked into the lounge.

Jordy sat at the table alone, nursing his flat beer. He felt like getting drunk, only that wouldn't help any. Oh, hell, what's the use, he thought. Christie, how could she act like this up here. She knows better. Dammit, I forgot about those sandwiches I said I'd get a while ago. He looked around for the waiter. The waiter was not there. Guess, I'll go out to the kitchen and order them myself, he thought, rising and walking to the kitchen.

Christie sobbed quietly in the lounge. She couldn't help but cry. She knew that Jordy was going to see the Berg woman again—go down to the Half-Way House. They probably have some women down there. That Wash, he's turning Jordy against me. So's everyone else. I suppose when I go out now, he'll be talking to Mrs. Force. Oh, God, what's the matter with him. He doesn't love me any more. Since the kids left he never stays home. Goes out all the time. He won't take me down to Williamsport like he should. He said I made a fool of myself. I talk silly. She wiped her moist face and looked into the mirror. Her eyes were bloodshot. He told me to shut up. I'm making a fool of him. Well, I'll show him. Maybe he'll leave me. No, he won't. He needs me too much. Who else would put up with him. The tears stopped. She hurriedly powdered her face. There was a streak of powder near her ear, one under her chin and one on the side of her nose. I'll go out and kiss him. They liked to see us fight, maybe they will like to see us make-up. That'll show them, too. I can be as sweet as they think he is. She walked out. Looked at the table nearest the door. Jordy wasn't there. God, he's left me. She ran over to the table to get her coat. I'll go after him and show him.

Just then a high-pitched laugh emanated from the kitchen. Christie turned around. Saw Jordy silhouetted in the kitchen doorway. He had a limpid smile on his lips. "Jordy, Jordy," Christie screamed. "I left you for a minute and you went in there with that woman. She ran to Jordy, screaming. "Jordy, Jordy." She pounded on his chest. Jordy grabbed her arms. One slipped away and her hand struck him on the shoulder. "Jordy," she kept screaming. She shook—screamed and shook. Then suddenly her whole body stiffened and then she fell sagging and unconscious into Jordy's arms.

Someone called a doctor and an ambulance. Jordy covered her with a coat. Another coat was bundled up to make a pillow. The cook looked at her, bewildered. "I just told Jordy a joke," she said quietly. The people in the club crowded round Christie at first, then backed up a little, stood and looked at her, whispered a little, watched the swollen veins in her neck go down. The doctor and

the ambulance came.

Jordy went to see Christie while she was in the hospital. All she would do was scream about the Berg woman, Wash, the Half-Way House. Sig went to see her too, but it was still the Berg woman, Wash, the Half-Way House. Her brother Pete and his wife came up from Williamsport to see her. It was all the same. She didn't stay long in the hospital. They took her away. Jordy still went to see her when he could. Every time that he went to see her after they took her away, she seemed to be doing less screaming and more just sitting and looking. He was down to see her yesterday. He stopped in at Sig's when he came back. Sig asked him how Christie was.

"Oh, Sig, she just sits and looks—doesn't seem to see anything—just sits and looks."

Why Ostrich Plumes for Hats

COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

Why ostrich plumes for hats?
Or Caesar's peacock tongues?

Oh, simple rose
And shallow orchid's charm, grow side by side
With daisies and white violets.

Why mad
Medea's moans? . . . or Cleopatra's loves?
Why breakfast in New York, and London time
For tea, and dinner in a Paris, France,
Cafe?

Ah, yes, I too was there and dined
With Princess Cathrine and the Queen. She said,
"How Chummy," and we called it "Having this
"In common."

Oh, I've seen the arts used like
A silver spoon. "My Palestrina sends
"Etherial tremors up and down my spine!"
In ghastly awe.

"You know, bridge makes you think?"
That's such a simple way to wage a war.
And, "Don't tell me, I've been a teacher all
"My life."

The purport of the diamond lies
Within an attitude.
These fickle tongues of parrots screech their noise.
Electra wept real tears, and Shakespeare said,

"I all alone bewEEP my outcast state."

That woman has to shave! A shout goes up
And banners fly above their heads. Their fangs
Reach out and send their venom-words into
Her tender heart. Split tongues lap up her grief
And thrive upon her tears. And Shakespeare said,
"I all alone bewEEP my outcast state."

From

On The Road to Nagasaki

HAROLD E. STINE

*(The following scene is an excerpt from a chapter of a novel,
the title of which appears above.)*

George Company had the guard. 2200, cold, raining, dark. Martin and Kelly stood against the side of the warehouse on Kelly's post, their best shelter from the rain. Their rifles were slung over their shoulders upside down to keep the rain from going down the bores. Their hands were deep in their pockets. The cold, fine rain sprayed in their faces and throats, and they shivered, looking out into the darkness. Water began to drop off the roof of the building, soaking into their clothing. Puddles were forming fast in the muddy ruts at their feet. The wind blew harder, cold blasts dashing the rain against their stomachs and thighs.

"Rain in January," Martin muttered, his teeth clenched from the cold.

Kelly was shivering, but his voice was calm, dry.

"Pennies from heaven," he said quietly without smiling or frowning.

A stream of water ran off the roof onto them, soaking into their shoulders. They moved farther along the wall, pressing against it, to get away from the spray. A gust of wind carried the rain against the wall, into their faces and clothing. They shuddered convulsively from the cold.

"This isn't going to work," Kelly announced quietly. "We'll have to get out of here or we will drown."

"Where'll we go?"

"Let's try your post. I think there are some old buildings behind the warehouse over there."

The two men ran, splashing through the ruts and puddles, up the road, approximately fifty yards, to Martin's post. They pressed themselves against the wall of the warehouse.

"Let's try around back. Maybe we can get inside someway."

They edged around to the back, keeping close to the wall. There was no rear entrance to the warehouse, but a small, battered

tin structure stood about twenty yards away. Its metal door, swinging noisily on rusty hinges, was banging against the walls. The shack was deserted.

"Over there," Kelly pointed.

They ran through the mud to the old abandoned shack and pulled the door shut behind them.

Practically the whole wall facing Kelly's post fifty yards down the road had been torn away. The shack was shelter from the rain and wind, however; there were few leaks in the roof. Kelly turned on his flashlight and looked over the cement floor of the shack. It was filthy, a layer of dirt and dried mud all over it, scores of old crates and metal machine parts, gears, bolts and plates lying around, dirt caked over the grease on them. Pieces of wood and old newspapers were scattered about.

"Too bad you never walk your post, Martin," Kelly said softly. "You might have discovered this place before the rain started."

Martin looked through the huge hole in the wall.

"This is all right here. We can observe both posts from here and at the same time watch for the O. D."

"You never have to worry about the O. D. on a night like this," Kelly assured him. "Even if he were a goddam duck he wouldn't venture out in this."

They stood by the opening in the wall looking toward Kelly's post. The damp clothing stuck to their bodies. It was cold. Kelly began to gather some old paper and small pieces of wood off the floor.

"Let's get a little flame going before our blood freezes," Kelly said.

Martin watched him as he lighted the small pile of sticks and newspaper. Kelly kicked apart a flimsy old crate and made another pile of wood to feed the fire. Warming his hands by the tiny blaze, Kelly explained, grinning:

"I used to be a boy scout."

"Why didn't you just rub two damp sticks together and start your fire that way? Hell of a boy scout you are . . . starting a fire with matches."

Kelly stared into the fire, the lapping yellow flames licking at the paper and sticks, giving off a musty, stale odor; but warmth, pleasant, comforting warmth.

"Rubbing sticks? . . ." Kelly chuckled as he knelt by the fire. "Hell, man, this is the atomic age."

Martin knelt down beside him, held his hands over the flame.

"This is elemental as hell, Frank," Martin grinned, "two companions in out of the rain, warming themselves by the fire."

Kelly looked at him closely, an odd expression on his face. Then he smiled slightly.

"Sounds good . . . Where'd you read that?"

Martin tried to look offended.

"I didn't read it anywhere. I thought it up . . . all alone, by myself."

Kelly shook his head thoughtfully. He seemed serious. His answer was the usual dry, cynical one.

"Amazing."

Martin pulled a crate over to the fire and sat down on it.

"Why don't you pull up a chair, Frank?"

Kelly continued to kneel, staring at the fire. He did not answer. Martin, too, looked at the flames, twisting, leaping . . . like a dog's tongue. Martin thought of the dog he had had at home, a little terrier . . . bright shining eyes, its long tongue, curled at the end, hanging over his teeth and out his mouth, panting after a run through the fields. Lady . . . thin, wiry, nervous little bitch . . . smartest dog Clyde ever saw.

Martin felt good by the fire. Elemental as hell . . . He felt close to Kelly. Never felt close to him before. Kelly was older . . . maybe twenty-six. Kelly was quiet, aloof, never said much. Nice guy, but never very familiar. Seems more familiar lately, especially tonight. Pretty much that way New Year's Eve, too. Kelly's a hard guy to get to talk to. Says so much and then stops . . . or changes the subject.

"That's what I thought, too," Kelly mumbled quietly, still looking into the fire.

"What?" Martin asked absently, laboring to bring his thoughts back to the shack.

"Elemental," Kelly looked up into Martin's face. He looked hard. The way he looked New Year's morning, walking back from Omura. "Yeh, this is elemental as hell."

Martin felt almost drowsy. There was little expression in his voice.

"You like it, uh?"

"Yes."

Martin grinned, felt a little less drowsy.

"Maybe that's the Tom Sawyer coming out in you."

"You believe in God, Martin?"

Kelly's question was abrupt. Martin didn't know how to answer.

"I don't know," he replied as though uninterested."

Kelly stood up, turned his back and walked to the other end of the shack. He carried a crate back and sat down on it, again looking into the fire, quiet.

Several minutes passed. Martin put a few pieces of wood in the small fire. He looked at his watch. 2300 . . . eleven o'clock. Outside it was not raining so hard as it had been, but it was still

coming down steadily. The wind had died away. Everything was quiet. The red embers in the fire cracked and snapped faintly. Martin felt the fire's hot breath on his cheeks and forehead. It was pleasant.

"My father wanted me to be a minister." Kelly said suddenly.

"Why didn't you become one, then?"

"Because I don't believe in it?"

There was a pause. Martin didn't answer.

"People are religious because they're scared . . . They're afraid to die. All this talk of heaven, eternal life . . . a psychological manifestation of the animal's fear of death."

"Come again? . . . I'm not used to hearing words like that."

"Any animal's scared to die. People are scared to die. Even if you're not scared, you still don't want to die. People know that someday they're going to die. They're scared, so they invent a heaven for their own convenience."

Martin smiled.

"That is probably the reason why the chaplains can boast that there are no atheists in foxholes."

Kelly looked intently at Martin.

"That's it exactly."

The men were silent for, perhaps, ten minutes. Kelly spoke again, even, quietly.

"Right here, Martin. This is elemental. You, me . . . the rain, and this fire . . . the war, the drunks, the whores . . ."

Martin laughed.

"Is this heaven?"

Kelly frowned.

"No."

Martin was sorry he had laughed and made the last remark. Kelly was quiet for a while and then went on. His voice was even and calm, soft, full. Martin liked to listen to it.

"Religion, to me, Martin, isn't fear of death and promise of reward. Religion should be goodness, trying to help someone."

"Doesn't religion include that?"

"It's supposed to, but it doesn't."

"That isn't religion's fault, is it?"

Kelly didn't answer for a while. He sat staring into the fire.

"People are fundamentally selfish, Martin. We've got to be that way to survive. We're all hopelessly self-centered . . . egotistic. It's impossible for us to do anything for anyone else; we're always doing it for ourselves."

Martin looked carefully at Kelly, the quiet, cynical Kelly who seldom spoke.

"Is that why you risked your neck to save Charlie Peters on

Iwo Jima, got two bullets in your leg and a nice shiny silver star to wear at parades?"

Kelly answered bluntly.

"Yes."

"How do you figure?"

"I didn't get any material reward for saving Peters, but I sure as hell got something out of it . . ."

"What?"

"A hell of a lot of satisfaction. It gave me something to feed my ego with . . . now I can go around saying to myself what a wonderful guy I am to have saved a life . . . my so-called 'heroism' is nothing but common, ordinary, selfish egoism."

Martin was puzzled, shocked at Kelly's blunt frankness, pleased with his sincerity about himself. He did not answer, but continued to look at his companion. Kelly smiled suddenly.

"Surprised . . . because your hero's selfish?"

Martin grinned faintly, felt awkward, embarrassed.

"Yes . . . a little bit. Still, I'm glad my hero's at least modest enough to admit it."

Kelly laughed, relaxing from his former tenseness.

"Thanks, Martin. I suppose I'm modest enough to admit *that*, but I'm really not modest."

Martin was completely baffled.

"That seems modest enough to me . . . to see you admit selfishness in such a noble case, even if it were true."

"It is true, though," Kelly persisted, grinning quizzically.

"Still, if anyone else had your silver star, he'd go around feeling like little Jesus himself."

"He'd be showing off, right?" Kelly asked smiling.

"That's the general idea."

"All right, I go around showing off how *modest* I am. Modesty is really a way of showing off . . . egoism. Then I go around telling myself what a wonderful guy I am for saving Charlie Peters."

Martin shook his head, puzzled, amazed.

"Is it really impossible to do *anything* good, then?"

"I don't know, Martin. I really don't know."

It was, again, several minutes before Kelly spoke. Martin sat watching him.

"When I was on Guadalcanal, Martin, I was just a kid. I saw two men running across a clearing one afternoon, two buddies. The one guy, the one behind, got hit and fell down. The other guy didn't see it and kept on running. His buddy lay there yelling to him, the bullets hitting all around him. Well, the other guy turned right around and went back after him."

Kelly paused, then went on.

"Now, that's nothing . . . happens everyday. But that guy

didn't *have* to go back, did he? . . . he could have stayed in safety and no one would have said 'boo'. He didn't have a chance. Still, he went back. There seemed to be no doubt in his mind. He went out."

Martin was watching Kelly closely as he spoke, fascinated. Kelly paused again and smiled.

"That guy didn't get a silver star either, because he didn't come back . . ."

"What's the difference between you and him?" Martin asked.

Kelly laughed.

"He's dead and I'm alive."

Kelly placed several more pieces of wood on the fire.

"I don't know, Martin," he went on seriously. "That really impressed me. I knew those guys, both of them, buddies. One was a Catholic, the other a Protestant. They both drank like hell and fooled around with all the women they could get a hold of. In the Chaplain's book they were probably bad boys . . ."

"They weren't bad, though, were they?" Martin asked.

Kelly looked back earnestly.

"There was a psychologist named Freud, and lots of others . . . to them a man's nothing but a selfish, hard-up, no-good bastard. I'm afraid I agree with them, too . . . but when people are in a pinch, they'll help each other. It looks sometimes as though that's the only time they *will* help each other. And when people are in a pinch, it's often the *no good* bastards who do the most to help the others."

Martin was too engrossed with what Kelly was saying to answer when he paused. Kelly went on.

"You asked about Charlie Peters. I believe man is too egoistic to be really altruistic . . . what I mean, he's too self-centered to really do anything for someone else. He does even the noblest thing to satisfy his own ego. A man's life is his most precious possession. If he offers it so that another man may keep his . . . then I think a man is being as good as a man can be . . . selfish as he is. When I saved Peters, my ego wanted me to be a good little boy—so my ego could be proud of Frank Kelly . . . that's all . . . It's impossible to be modest, *actually* modest, so I try to do the next best thing, just be barely modest enough to admit that I'm *not* modest."

Martin looked into Kelly's eyes. He thought that he was not looking into the eyes of an ordinary man. Kelly was an intelligent man, to be sure, hardened, cynical. He had admitted he was not a noble man, nor a modest man. He was, at least, an honest man. Martin spoke slowly.

"That's modest enough for me, Frank."

Kelly smiled affably.

"Thanks."

Kelly looked back into the fire. So did Martin. It was burning low. The weaving flames quivered, seemed old and tired, exhausted.

"What time is it, Martin?"

"Eleven-thirty."

"We have only a half hour to go. Think I'll wander on back to my own post. The relief'll probably be early tonight."

It had stopped raining, the sky had cleared in places. In front of the moon, the black clouds had silver fringes.

Kelly stepped through the gaping hole in the wall of the battered building and strode through the field toward the road. Martin still sat by the dying fire looking after him.

One honest man. There are no unselfish men. There are no modest men. Maybe there are no good men. But there are those who are honest . . . and they are found in the strangest places . . .

Martin put out the fire, went out through the door, left it swinging on its squeaky, rusty hinges as it was when they had entered an hour and a half before. The wind had died down. Everything was still . . . cold . . . clear. The air had an invigorating, refreshing odor. The moon came out for a moment, the water-soaked fields seemed covered with soft, glimmering silver. The silver faded as a cloud again passed in front of the moon. Martin stared at the dark outline of the hulking warehouse on Kelly's post. He shuddered from the cold. The darkness was scary.

Consolation A La Yiddish

BEATRICE M. LIPEZ

It is the custom of Rebekah Lodge No. 3 to send cards to various members of its organization informing them of the illness of another member and requesting them to make a call of cheer on a set date. It is Tuesday and Mrs. Mandelbaum's day to call on sister Goldie Goldman, who is recuperating from an attack of the grippe.

Mrs. Mandelbaum's climb up the stairs to her friend's bedroom has been made with audible physical exertion and she enters the room cloaked in an air of genuine martyrdom. Her eyes hungrily seize upon the bedside chair before they fasten on Goldie. Without restraint she throws her elephantine weight on its frail moorings to the accompaniment of deep sighs and a noisy inhalation of nasal drippings.

Sister Goldie Goldman will not find speech necessary or possible—she has only to lean back among the pillows, smile her ap-

proval or frown her displeasure. The filibuster is on and Mrs. Mandelbaum speaks.

Hallo, Goldie dollink, oi, I taught already I wouldn't be here. Don't esk, I vuz by Tsadie Rebinowitz's funerril, end I'm hecually ded mineself. I didn't tink I could dreg mineself here. Ummmm—de cerrying on vot vuz dere—I'm telling you it vould break from you de heart. Oi, I kent beliv it—Tzadie vuz such a dollink goil, such a vunderful vife, and such an vunderful mudder. Oi, yoi, yoi, yoi, it dunt pay in dis voild you should be so good. I kent make mine self I should beliv it. I seen her to da mitting only lest Sunday—she hed it ah cold like you hev it, end naw she's dead. Oi, vay is mir! Vat's de medder vit you, Goldie, dear, you look so vite? Here, svithart, I'll fix for you da pillow ah little bit. Det's better naw, hah?

Here, dollink, I almost forgot, I brud it fur you, some plums. Dere vunderful—so joosy end svit like sugar. Vot? You kent eat dem? Det's too bed (eats plum). Um-m-m-, dey're vunderful! I'll bet it vould make you better you should eat one. Hallrite, hallrite, I von't be so persnistent.

Oi, I'll never forget it—it vuz such an vunderful funeral, dey hed it cars for miles. Dare vuz at list tree lodges dare hend hall da hozzilyaries. But de vay Silverman vuz trying to be da big boss hend show her atority from da lodge I couldn't stend it. If I hev it mine vay she vouldn't ever hev it ah chence from de next helection. Oi, Mrs. Big Chif, she hes to stend in de front from everybody—like it should be her funeral. I never sin it so meny pipples. You know who vuz dere—de rich Lipsitzes, de kendy manufacturers. If somebody vouldn't told me I vouldn't know who dey ver. Dere verry hordinary looking pipples—she's ah big fet womin end he's ah little shkinny men. She looks like she's da boss—evrabydy sez she's da brains from da whole bizness, end he looks like he don't hev it such ah easy life vid her. Everybody sez dare such vonderful pipples—I don't see it no meddils on dem.

O, you know who else vuz dare—Krevitz vuz daer vid her dodder, Goitrude. You din't hold from Goitrude? Vell, she got it ah rich feller, end she hed it ah rock on her finger ded vould knock from you da eyes out. Five kerets! Da luck some pipples hev it in dis voild. Krevitz vus telling me he's ah rich feller from New York—ah dress menufecturer. End dare so rich, dey hev it ah pents hawse on Pak Avenoo—dey say its ah muvving piktire. You kent himeggine from such gojisness. Dey hev dis boy vot is engaged by Goitrude end dey hev it ah dodder, ah littel kid, so for her dey hev it haxtra spashil a governor should take care from her. You hoid from such tings, hah? So Krevitz vus telling me dare so crazy from Goitrude, his mudder gave her a diamond brutch for

an ingagement present. Such ah flat chested skinny ting—she hes it maybe ah place she should vear it ah brutch? End de hents, vit de huncles, vit de kuzins, dey showered her vit such presents—silver knives, silver fuks, silver plates, heverting you could himegine solid silver, solid stoilink. You hoid from such tings, hah? Such an humly ting! Ah tall skinny pletinum blonde vot don't know from nodding but fellers. She ain't got it vun ounce brains in her head. You ken compare her vit mine Sarah, hah? Oi, you don't hev to hev it brains, ye don't hev to hev it looks; you got to hev vun tink—Luck!—det's all.

Oi, Goldie, ven I stop to tink of Rebinovitz, it breaks mine hart. Vot ken ah men do ven he's left alone in de voild vit tree children? Goldie, you know vot I vuz tinkng, you're an nice looking vidow. You hev it only vun boy, so ven he gets merried, you'll be alone in de voild. All right, maybe he ain't tinkng of getting married tomorrow yet, but you never ken tell from such tings. So sweetheart, Goldie dear, ven you're feeling ah little bit stronger, you shouldn't vaste no time. Go over dare to see Rebinovitz, bring de kiddies ich ah nice liddle present, end fix chicken soup vit luxhin end fix maybe ah liddle sthruddle. You know vid lots of nuts, vid raisins, vit everyting good. Fix it should look nice on de plate—vid a beyudiful paper nepkin—he should know by you in de house is evrating nice. End ven you go over dare, Goldie svithart, so fix yourself ah liddle bit—ah liddle litstick, ah liddle rouge. Vare ah nice pair irrings—it don't hoit, dollink, every men likes it ah voman should hev it ah little glemur. You know, ven by ah men is hevny in de heart, it makes him fill good he should see ah voman should look nice. Goldie, you're ah sensible voman. You hev to face it fects. You know, dollink, I loved Tsadie, like she vuz mine own sister, det's vy I'm talking to you like dis. I'm talking from de heart. You vould make it such ah vunderful mudder for doz tree children. You kent be slow in medders like dis—becuz I hev it on realiable atority det somebody else hez it ah eye on him. I vouldn't mantion no names, but I ken tell you dis much, I vouldn't vote for her she should be President again from dem Lodge for nodding. Mrs. Big Chief Know Evrating! All I'm telling you, dollng, you kent afford you should be slow in metters like dis.

Oi, it must be late already, dollng, I bedder hurry home. I got to fix it supper for Sem. I hed it already four funirils dis veek. You should take care from yourself, Goldie, dollng, you shouldn't ketz nemonya. If I hev it von more funiril dis vieek by me vill be a divorce in de court. Believe me, I'm so glad I seen you, dollink,

I'm so glad I could cheer you ah liddle bit—already you look vun hundret per tsent better. Good-bye, dollink, oi, evra time I look et you, I kent help tinkin from poor Saadie!

With this reminder of their dear departed sister, Mrs. Mandelbaum stages her exit. The farewell is accompanied by more and noisier inhalations and gesture towards the eyes with an over-worked handkerchief, fruitlessly seeking a tear. Mrs. Mandelbaum can now conscientiously report to Rebekah Lodge No. 3 that on May the fifth, she made her call of cheer.

A Rich Potential Through Its Myriad Ties

COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

A rich potential through its myriad ties,
This room, with connotations of a past
Inheritance, sends up a flame that plies
The primitive in form. This sturdy caste—
Inspired only among themselves to build.
These rich sgraffito plates, this latch with hearts
Of purest form, this frame of golden guild,
And this wrought-iron candlesticks (these arts
That I so greatly prize)—as you today,
Living without the thought of giving gifts,
Gave me perceptive warmth. This apt array
Of care-free reveries, filtering, lifts
My fears above the mist of doubt, and lends
A crystalline light to these harmonious blends.

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